

Holding Your Meetings Online

Do your bylaws allow you to meet (and vote) online?

A suggested bylaw amendment to meet and vote via the internet:

Meetings Held Electronically. Except as otherwise provided in these bylaws, meetings of the board (and/or membership) shall be conducted through use of internet meeting services, designated by the president (and/or board) that support visible displays identifying those participating, those seeking recognition to speak, showing (or permitting the retrieval of) the text of pending motions, allowing members to vote, and showing the results of votes.

There are also apps available that allow you to vote anonymously if you choose to add them (VoxVote, MyVote, etc.)

In the meantime.....record in your minutes what you're doing and why, for example, "Meeting called to order via Zoom due to a global health crisis, or quarantine, or inability to meet in person.

Your group should adopt special rules on how to meet online.

Some sample rules and/or things to consider:

1. Login information—secretary (or president) sends out the login information to every member before each meeting along with your online meeting procedure. An agenda may help with expectations.
2. Call-in time—secretary (or president) logs in 15 minutes early to handle technical issues.
3. Co-host—it is very helpful to have a co-host. While the chair is handling the meeting, the co-host monitors the waiting room, raised hands, questions in chat, and informs the chair.
4. Arrival/departure announcements—if requested, members can announce themselves when joining or leaving the meeting (without interrupting a speaker) (Zoom uses a waiting room or you can set up a sound that chimes every time someone enters or leaves a meeting). You can specify when setting up the meeting if you would rather have members muted as they enter or choose to mute everyone when you call the meeting to order.
5. Quorum—how will you indicate that you have quorum—roll call, number of attendees indicated by software? (Zoom displays number of participants)
6. Obtaining the floor—how will members seek recognition by the chair: verbally address the chair, raise hand (Zoom), something else? There should be only one person talking at a time so the chair can keep control of the meeting and the secretary can take minutes easily.
7. Motions—how will members make motions? Some possibilities: members may submit motions to the chair in writing by emailing or in the chat? Screen sharing? Something else? Are verbal motions okay? Make sure the secretary has what she needs for the minutes to be accurate.
8. Voting—how will you take a vote—raise of hands, voice, roll call? (Zoom also has a yes/no). Another example: The secretary can post the question using screen sharing, the chair can alert the members that the polls are open to cast their votes online. Allow at least two minutes before closing the polls. Or use unanimous consent to conduct business as a time saver ("If there's no objection, the minutes are approved as distributed.")
9. Technical malfunctions—each member is responsible for their connection to the internet; no action shall be invalidated on the grounds that a malfunction prevented a member's participation in the meeting.
10. Forced disconnections—the chair may disconnect or mute a member's connection if it is causing undue interference with the meeting.

These guidelines are very general and might not fit every group's needs. If you have any questions or need help, feel free to contact me!

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